

Cape Town Carnival unveils 2019 theme

Following deliberation, participating groups, organisers, and artists from more than 50 neighbourhoods across Cape Town have collectively decided that the theme for the 2019 Cape Town Carnival is Vuka Ukhanye: Arise and Shine!

“We’re a family at the Cape Town Carnival, and we work together as much as possible in the creative processes that lead up to the annual event that takes place on 16 March next year,” says Brad Baard, creative director of the Cape Town Carnival.



The 2019 theme incorporates everything that the Carnival family feels truly depicts Vuka Ukhanye: Arise and Shine! Baard says, “The parade is a vivid journey of awakening, from sunrise and literally waking up in the morning, to symbolically waking up your own power.”

The parade journey begins with the blooming and blossoming of sunflowers turning towards the light, brought to life by the costume department through African-inspired headwear and skirts. These are a handful of the 3,500 costume items the small but very hardworking department makes each year, many of them created by repurposing and recycling materials. “Every year we look forward to having a new theme to challenge us and push our creative boundaries,” says costume supervisor Michael Bagapi.

Dancing to the theme

Dance is an integral part of the parade, with participants spending countless hours choreographing, learning, and practising their routines. “I’m always inspired by the enthusiasm of the local groups and blown away by their interpretation of the theme through dance,” says Carnival choreographer Mbovu Malinga. Malinga, who has been part of the Carnival family since 2015, ensures that all choreography gives group members the opportunity to shine and show what they’re capable of while also giving them ownership and voice in the process.



Among the fabulous floats lining up to make an appearance in the Vuka Ukhanye: Arise and Shine! parade next year are “Wakey Wakey”, “The Mad Machine”, “Social Activism”, and “Shine Your Light”. Baard explains that this last float, the culmination of the parade, represents the unleashing of personal and collective power and potential “in a surge of light rays and intricate patterns, creating a magnificent mandala for spectators, flanked by people wearing impressive matching outfits.”

Prof. Rachel Jafta, chairperson of the Cape Town Carnival Trust, notes: “The Carnival is a hub for everyone to express themselves creatively and to actively be part of making the theme come to life.” And every participant in the annual spectacular takes away life-changing personal insights.

Nonkoliseko Somagu, a dancer who joined the Carnival family five years ago after a successful lead performer audition, says: “I’ve learnt the importance of giving a memorable experience to the audience by tuning into the lead performer’s character and using bodily moves, props and costumes to tell a story and paint a picture that can captivate the minds of our audience.”